
Higher Education Committee

2SSB 5914

Brief Description: Studying potential higher education opportunities in Vancouver.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Carlson and Kohl-Welles).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Directs the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to conduct a feasibility study for additional baccalaureate and graduate opportunities in Vancouver and submit findings by December 15, 2004. The WSIPP will also develop a study proposal to investigate need for additional baccalaureate access in other parts of the state.

Hearing Date: 2/25/04

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

In 1989, the Legislature directed Washington State University (WSU) to operate a branch campus in the Vancouver area. WSU Vancouver currently enrolls 1,219 full-time equivalent students and offers a variety of degree programs, with enrollment concentrated in business, education, and social sciences. Most students transfer from two community colleges: Clark College in Vancouver and Lower Columbia College in Longview.

To attract greater numbers of students in high demand fields and support regional economic growth, the three institutions have been developing an Engineering and Science Institute (Institute) where students enroll jointly at WSU Vancouver and a community college as freshmen. According to a recent study of branch campuses, community leaders are energized by the Institute, although the concept means different things to different people. Some see it as a first step toward WSU Vancouver becoming a four-year institution; others see it as a way to improve transfer and lend prestige to the two-plus-two model of education. The 2003 Legislature provided \$2.7 million in support of this initiative for the 2003-05 biennium, and WSU Vancouver received an additional \$663,000 for high demand enrollments for the 2004-05 academic year.

Summary of Bill:

The WSIPP will conduct a feasibility study for creating additional baccalaureate and graduate opportunities for public higher education in Vancouver. The study includes:

1. A detailed regional analysis of student demand and supply of degree programs, including potential economic development and consultation with community leaders;
2. Consideration of alternative models for providing education in the region;
3. Examination of the possible role and mission of a four-year university, including the possibility of an innovative combination of instruction and research to meet the region's needs for access and expansion of the region's economic viability; and
4. A comparison of short and long-term costs.

Findings from the study are due December 15, 2004. The WSIPP will also develop a study proposal for investigating the need for additional baccalaureate access in other parts of the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.